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# NARRATIVE

OF A

# *EVIVAL OF RELIGION,*

IN THE

IRD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN BALTIMORE,

WITH REMARKS ON

*SUBJECTS CONNECTED WITH*

# REVIVALS IN GENERAL.

BY W. C. WALTON:
*Pastor of the said Church.*

NORTHAMPTON:
PRINTED AND SOLD BY H. FERRY.
1826.

# NARRATIVE, &C.

The subject of revivals has, for a number of years, engaged my attention, and excited the liveliest feelings of interest in my bosom. Until lately, however, I had no knowledge of it, except what I had gathered from written or verbal narratives. The reading or hearing of these, has often kindled in my breast inexpressible desires to witness and feel the blessed reality of a revival. I have sometimes thought, especially when I have been listening to such reports in the synod, or general assembly, that "now I will make some new and more vigorous effort than I have yet made, and peradventure the Lord will smile upon my labor and crown it with success." But such feelings were of short duration. My mind soon settled down to its ordinary tone, when I returned to my old scene of labor; and I thought I saw so many difficulties in the way that I often sunk into a state of despondency and hopelessness. I was conscious of aiming, at least, to preach the whole truth of the Gospel, to the best of my knowledge and ability; and in doing this, I thought I must leave every thing else to the Divine sovereignty. On this ground my mind was much more at rest than it ought to have been. I was neglecting my duty. Not that I failed to fulfil my stated appointments, when health and other circumstances would admit; but my preaching was not sufficiently plain, and pointed, and discriminating. Another great defect was that I too seldom disturbed the conscience of saint or sinner in private. I often conversed on the subject of religion; but it was in such a way, that I fear it did but little good. It is as necessary that we should be close, pointed, solemn, and pressing, when preaching the Gospel to an individual, or to a few individuals, in private, as when we are addressing a multitude in public.

At length I was removed, by the providence of God, to another sphere of labor. This gave me a fresh excitement; and from the time I came to my present situation, I felt an increasing desire to have a revival. I was inquisitive on the subject, and tried to obtain all the information I could respecting the means which had been most remarkably blessed. Just at that time I had formed an acquaintance with a young

man, a student of theology, who had been in several revivals, and who had conversed with Rev. Mr. Nettleton on the subject. He knew Mr. Nettleton's views and plans of operation. He stated them to me; and they appeared so reasonable and so scriptural, that I felt no hesitation in receiving them. Believing now, that if *we made use of the proper means we might have a revival*, I immediately prepared a sermon on the subject. After service, on a Sabbath morning, I requested all the communicants to remain a short time. We then addressed them more particularly and solemnly on the subject; and concluded by urging them to meet, two or three together, in different parts of the congregation to converse and pray for this object. On the same evening, and at the same hour, we assembled a few young people at a private house, and talked to them tenderly and solemnly about the concerns of their souls. These meetings on Monday evening were continued. Meanwhile, *we visited from house to house*, and conversed with all whom we met, if circumstances appeared to be favorable. We came to the point without needless ceremony, and as soon as our message was delivered, we departed. We also endeavored to impress upon the minds of professing christians, that now they ought to be very solemn and much engaged, and so to order their conversation, that it might tend to deepen the impression which we wished to make, on the minds of their children, and others around them. About that time we commenced a meeting on Friday evening *for professors only*, with a view to engage them in such exercises as would lead them to self-examination, self-abasement, humble confession to God, and earnest prayer for the outpouring of his Spirit.

We had not labored long in this manner, before we saw something like the beginning of a work of grace. The young people who attended our Monday evening meeting, evinced more and more concern, and soon it became literally and emphatically *an anxious meeting;* and so it continues to this day. The beginning of this work was about the latter part of June, 1823. But no satisfactory cases of conversion took place until the last of July. Early in October sixteen persons were admitted to our communion, as the first fruits of the revival. The day on which they were examined and received, was observed by them, and by the communicants, as a day of fasting, prayer and thanksgiving. The exercises of the communion Sabbath were greatly blessed. In three *days afterwards* there were nearly thirty hopeful conversions.

On the 22d of November, we admitted twenty nine more to our communion, and on the 6th of February, 1824, we admitted eighteen; amounting in all to sixty three. The whole number of hopeful conversions, is between eighty and ninety. I trust the work is still going on in this congregation; and there are encouraging indications of a similar work in several parts of the city. There is a union prayer meeting every Saturday evening, which is crowded by the pious of different denominations, for the purpose of praying for a general revival of religion. In my own congregation we have a meeting of some description or other, every evening in the week. The old men, the young men, the old ladies, the young ladies, all have their respective meetings for conference and prayer. A considerable proportion of young men are subjects of this work. A large majority, however, are young females. A number of these are actively employed in conducting a free adult female school. They have, with much labor, sought out the scholars from among the poor, obtained money to defray the expenses of the school, and devote two nights in each week to the business of instruction. They have about fifty scholars already, and the school is yet in its infancy. Much attention is paid to their religious instruction; two have experienced a hopeful change, and many others are much concerned about the state of their souls. Nearly all the teachers in our Sabbath schools are now the professed disciples of Christ.

Some of the young converts have met with much opposition, and they have displayed a degree of firmness, tempered with christian meekness and tenderness, which has surprised and delighted me.

Some of the most moral, kind, good natured people, in the estimation of the world, who had long been resting upon their morality, and the goodness, of their natural dispositions, have been convinced that *they also* had "hearts deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." They have appeared to suffer as much under conviction as any persons I have seen; and they now regard themselves as miracles of grace. They think their condition was above all others most dangerous; and wonder that they were ever awakened from their awful delusion. One of these—an old lady—never had any idea of the wickedness of her heart, until in a conversation with her, I referred her to those passages of scripture which relate to that subject, and turned down the leaves of her Bible to them, requesting her to read them at

her leisure and reflect upon them.—The opposition of the heart to God, has been felt by all; but some have felt it in a much higher degree than others. They have been surprised and affrighted, to find that their hearts were so *very* wicked, beyond every thing they had ever conceived of themselves before. They have been constrained to confess that they did not like the character of God; that they were unwilling to put themselves into his hand, and could not bear the idea of his doing with them as he pleased. One, under conviction, was put into a rage, when she heard that her companions had obtained hope. Another, when rising from her knees without comfort, has often "gritted her teeth against the Savior"—her own expression—because she thought he was showing more favor to others than to her. These facts are stated, because they illustrate the scripture doctrine, of the enmity of the sinner's heart against God; a doctrine which has been often dwelt upon in this revival, both in public and private: and we think every effort ought to be made, to convince the impenitent that this doctrine is true; that they are indeed, what the apostle affirms they are, "haters of God." Nothing has a more direct tendency to produce the conviction, that they are justly condemned and lost. Convictions have continued from one to three weeks. Relief has been, generally, almost instantaneous, and often accompanied with much sensible joy. This joy has sometimes been felt, without their reflecting, that the change they had experienced had placed them in a state of *safety*, as true believers. Their joy arose from the actual change in their dispositions and views. Before their hearts were hard, rebellious, unwilling to submit to God, and often rose against him. But now they melt and yield sweetly to his government, confessing they *deserve* to be condemned, and feeling, it is *right* that God should do with them as he pleases. They have such a view of his character, that they are cordially reconciled to him: yea more than reconciled; they love him, rejoice in him, and make an unreserved surrender of themselves to him. And this they do, not because they feel assured he will save them; but because they see it is *right* they should do so, *whether he save them or not*. Christ is precious to them, and they appear willing to part with any thing for him, and to take up the cross for his sake. Some have submitted to sacrifices and self-denials for conscience' sake and from love to the Savior, which come nearer to the example of primitive christians, than any thing I had

before witnessed. Others when the change has taken place, have experienced a calm, sweet peace of mind, accompanied by a strong desire for the salvation of sinners. All unite in saying the *very moment* they were heartily willing to give up all for Christ, and to surrender themselves unreservedly to him they found relief. They wonder that they should not have been willing before; or that they should have found it so difficult to comply with terms which now appear so easy and so reasonable. They see that all the change that has taken place, has been in *themselves;* that God is the same now, that he was when they were thinking so very hardly of him; that their cries of distress did not move him to change his terms; but that they were now *willing* to comply with them, which they had never been before, although they *then* thought they were willing. All appear to have been brought to nearly the same state of mind, before they found relief; namely, to feel that they were *lost.* Matt. xviii, 11. Some after having done all they could, as they thought, have been tempted to give up the pursuit of religion as hopeless. One remained in this state for a day or two, without doing any thing; but in a miserable state of mind. At length, she found, that after all her doings, she had not done the *very thing* she was commanded to do, and which alone could save her. She had not *repented and given up herself to Christ as a lost sinner.* She therefore made another vigorous effort, feeling that it was a case of life or death, and late at night she found rest to her soul. Another, in a similar state of mind, was tempted to think there was *no reality* in religion, or she would have obtained it. She thought she had done as much as others, and that they were deceived in supposing they had experienced a change. She was soon convinced, however, that she had mistaken the matter, and that while she had done many things, she had neglected to do the very thing the gospel requires; namely, to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. In this state of mind she returned home from a prayer meeting, and continued all night in prayer, reading, &c. and just about the break of day she found rest for her soul.

I could state many other interesting facts; but it would extend the narrative to an improper length.

What I have witnessed in this revival has convinced me of the following things:—

1st. That many are deceived in fancying they desire to have a revival, and that they are doing every thing in their power to promote that object, and yet God will not grant the blessing. I was long under this mistake, and I fear it is a very common one. We are too apt to take our standard of duty from custom rather than the Word of God. We are influenced more than we ought to be, by the defective examples of those whom we regard as our superiors in age or abilities; and we often take it for granted, that because we are doing as much as ministers and christians generally do, that therefore nothing more is required of us. Many are so well satisfied with the old beaten track that has long been pursued, that they seem to say—although they would not adopt the very words—"If God will not meet us in this way, we will not go out of it to meet him." Some preach the gospel with much apparent zeal and animation; but they seem to forget that they have a *great work* to do *out* of the pulpit, as well as *in* the pulpit. Ministers may preach regularly, and the people may attend punctually; but where other means are not employed, much success has rarely been witnessed. The impressions made by the labors of the Sabbath, ought, as far as practicable, to be followed up and deepened by *close personal conversation.* Such continual efforts to do good, would have a salutary reaction upon ourselves, and would often furnish most interesting and useful materials for the composition of sermons. Besides—the habit of conversing with persons of every description about the concerns of their souls, has a better tendency than any thing we hear from our theological instructers, to correct that stiffness and formality of style and manner, which detract so much from the usefulness of many young ministers; and to bring us to that *natural, familiar, simple* method of illustrating and enforcing Divine truth, which has ever characterized the preaching of those who have been most extensively useful. Plain, pointed conversation, exhibiting that earnestness which ought to be felt when we are engaged in such an employment, is the means on which I most rely, under the blessing of God, for commencing and carrying on a revival. It alarms sinners to be attacked in this unusual way. It often makes them tremble, and sometimes produces considerable irritation. But it is probably the best method that ever was tried, of producing convictions of sin. This fills up the *anxious meetings;* and we shall often *be surprised* to find at these meetings, persons, on whom

we had supposed our conversation had made no salutary impression. I regard this method of "preaching the gospel to every creature," as being so pre-eminently important, that I would be glad to have an opportunity of *beseeching* every minister who has neglected it, to make a fair experiment of it, as far as his health and circumstances will admit. I know there are many, who are much more faithful in this and every other department of ministerial labor, than I have ever been. But I also know, there are many who have never made any thing like a full experiment of the power of this engine for destroying the kingdom of Satan. To such I would say—Dear brethren, be *entreated* to make trial of this method of arousing the attention of your people, both saints and sinners. Examine the former closely, on experimental and practical religion; show them their duties and their responsibilities in all their extent, and your hearts will often burn within you, while thus conversing together;—and a book of remembrance will be written in heaven.—And as to the latter, let them see that you feel concerned for them, and can be faithful to them in private as well as in public; and in discharging this duty, let meekness, and prudence, and love, be associated with zeal,—and verily the Lord will bless your labor.

Persons who begin to exhibit unusual seriousness and attention to religion, ought if possible, to be visited *frequently*. They strive against their impressions, and they will often be successful, unless we *belabor* them, time after time, and almost compel them to think, and consider what they are doing. They will sometimes try to keep out of our way, and perhaps, fly from us as from an enemy; but we must not be discouraged. Many in this revival, have been awakened, and now give good evidence of a change of heart, who felt and acted in this manner; and now they believe, that but for these persevering efforts on our part, they would have been lost forever.—There are many in such a state of mind, that the ordinary means of public instruction do not appear to reach their case. Some are so stupid, that they cannot, with the little interest they feel on the subject, understand a common sermon; and others are so thoughtless or so worldly, that they will not be made to reflect, or brought to close self-examination, by any discourse addressed to a promiscuous assembly. In this state they may attend the house of God for many years, and at last, without something like a miracle of sovereign mercy, they will die in ignorance,

and in sin. And will not their blood be required at the watchman's hand, who, from indolence, or the love of reputation, neglected to warn the wicked man of his way, in private, as well as in public?—I would here remark, that while thus laboring with individuals, it is a good maxim, to *"light no more fires than we can well attend"*—In this work of faith and labor of love, the minister ought to be aided by his elders and other private christians. They should all lay the subject to heart; converse and pray together, as the disciples did before the day of pentecost. *They* were engaged "with one accord;" they had *one* object in view; they had *one* desire respecting it; that desire dictated *one* prayer, and *every heart felt it.* All who have read the Acts of the Apostles, know what was the result.

2d. I have also been more than ever convinced of the necessity of *plain, pungent, discriminating preaching.* I do not mean, merely, that we should use plain words; for that we may do in the most abstruse argumentation. But I mean that we should aim as much as possible to *simplify* divine truth, by employing such illustrations as are familiar, and easy of comprehension. We should endeavor to make things so plain, that our hearers may *see them with their own eyes,* and that too, without much labor of mind.—I mean also, that we should not be afraid to call things by their *proper names,* or to make *direct applications* as we proceed; no matter who may be affected by them. In order to do this, a minister must obtain much of that independent spirit, of that simple desire to please God, and to save the souls of men, which characterised the Savior when he condescended to perform the work of the ministry.—When we are addressing a very ignorant audience, or a congregation of Africans, we feel no concern, as to what they will think of our performance. Our aim is to give them simple, plain instruction, to convey to their minds clear, distinct views of divine truth. In this way, with the blessing of God, we hope to make a saving impression. Such should be our feelings, and such our aim, whensoever, wheresoever, and to whomsoever, we may be called to preach the gospel.

There is in my humble apprehension, too much speculating, philosophising and systematising, in most of the sermons that we hear. This mode of preaching, however interesting it may be to students of theology, and to men of cultivated minds, is so much above the thoughts and reasonings of common people, that they receive no distinct impressions

ɔm it. Such labor is worse than lost on the great major- of hearers. It leads many to regard religion as an in- lectual, affair, consisting chiefly in rational and orthodox INIONS; and others to invest the subject with mysteries and ficulties, which do not properly belong to it. Sermons this description seldom, if ever disquiet the conscience; and e might conclude from their structure and the materials which they are composed and the indifferent manner in ıich they are often delivered, that they are not designed have that effect. The gospel is not likely to prove the wer and the wisdom of God to the salvation of sinners, un- s they who preach it, recollect that they have to do with ɜ hearts and consciences, as well as the intellect of men. Nothing is so well calculated to rectify the error of which m now speaking, where it exists in the mind of one who ılly desires to be useful, as the habit of conversing freely ɨ closely with individuals. This will soon convince any n of common discernment, of the necessity of adopting a le of preaching, similar, in some respects to that of Christ ɨ his Apostles. But they who would do this at the pres- : day, when a different style has become so common and popular, ought to count the cost. They must be willing sacrifice their reputation for scholastic learning, and to e that place in the public estimation, which will be as- ned them by "the wisdom of this world," which we know 'foolishness with God." They must learn to despise the ɔfane criticisms of the ungodly, while they commend them- ves to God, and to every man's conscience in the sight of ɨ.

ɜd. I have also been convinced, that the obligation of sinner to repent and submit to God IMMEDIATELY, is too le insisted on. Repentance is indeed a common topic of :ourse; but I would submit it to the consideration of every icious Christian, whether this subject is not often spoken n such a manner, as leaves the impression on the minds inners, that in refusing to repent immediately, they are not ımitting a wilful aggravated sin, which deserves the dam- ion of hell; but only running a RISK in waiting until they ll be enabled to repent? They have the notion that re- ıtance is something which must indeed be done in order heir salvation. But instead of laying it to heart as an EDIATE DUTY, which they are under the strongest obliga- ı to perform; they think they must wait until God does ır them. The EXTENT to which their conviction of DUTY

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the real desires of an impenitent sinner's heart. While he remains entirely careless, it will be readily admitted, that his desires, if expressed even on his knees, would not be pleasing to God.

But he becomes alarmed by a conviction of danger, and is in great distress on that account. What does he desire now? Has his distress changed the disposition of his soul so much, that now he really desires to be holy? If so, he is no longer the character of which I am now speaking: that is to say—he is not an impenitent sinner; for it involves a contradiction to say, an impenitent sinner desires to be holy. How can he desire to be holy, when he is not sorry that he has sinned against God, on any other account than because his sins exposed him to punishment? The Apostle says, he is at enmity against God. To say then that he desires to be holy, is equivalent to saying he desires to love God when he hates him! When sinners, therefore, say they are in distress and desire to have religion, and yet cannot obtain it, we understand what they mean by religion; it is the pardon of their sins and some assurance that they will be happy when they die. This is the sum total of the religion they desire, and this is what they are seeking. It is no wonder then, that they do not find it, when we consider that God has promised no such religion in the Bible. It would be separating what he has joined together. He has promised to pardon none but those who repent, believe and obey. To others who may pretend to seek his favor, he says,—"When ye spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes; yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear."

What then, it may be asked, is the distressed impenitent sinner to do, when he cannot desire the holy, humbling religion of the Gospel? or feel willing to submit to God, and to render to him that homage of the heart which he requires? Must he cease from praying? The answer is obvious. The want of a right disposition towards God, cannot release him from the obligation of prayer, or of any other duty. It is as much his duty to pray as if he were the holiest saint on earth. All that is required of the christian is required of him; and yet he does nothing acceptably. His heart is altogether wrong in the sight of God, and that pollutes all, and brings the sentence of condemnation upon all he does. His sins are increasing continually; nothing but the mere mercy of God keeps him out of hell for a moment; and soon he must be there, unless he submit and consent to be saved on the terms

of the Gospel. If with this truth impressed upon his mind, he cannot be willing to comply with the terms, there is no hope for him. Without this willingness, he cannot be saved, although he should spend his days and nights too in weeping and in supplication. If he still ask—how am I to feel this willingness? We answer, the question involves an absurdity. How is a man, whose body is perishing and dying for the want of nourishment, to feel a desire for that nourishment, and a willingness to receive it when it is offered to him? If he says he does not desire it, and will not receive it—that being the only means of preserving his life;—why—he must die. And so we may say to the sinner. Here are the bread and water of life. If you are hungry, eat; if you are thirsty, drink. If you *will* not—you *must* die!

The error I am now combatting, seems to arise from the erroneous supposition, that when the sinner is awakened, and begins to reform his external conduct, and to use the means of grace, his heart is growing better in the sight of God; that he is becoming less and less unworthy; and that by this gradual diminution of his unworthiness, he is making a gradual approximation towards a right state of feeling. Hence the direction—Continue praying—persevere—you are in a hopeful way—after a while you will obtain religion, &c.

We ought to consider what the Bible says, respecting the state of those to whom we give this direction. It describes them as being enemies and rebels against God. "We will not have this man to reign over us;" is the language of their hearts. Now, there is no medium between hating and loving God. Will he then accept of any services from those, whose hearts he knows are at enmity with him, even when they are most assiduously performing their religious duties? How can they be said to be in a hopeful way, or in the way to obtain religion, while they remain in this state of mind? Is sinning directly against God in their hearts, the way to obtain religion? Is the indulgence of enmity, the way to come to the exercise of love? Is the indulgence of pride, stubbornness and rebellion, the way to come to humble submission? There is no medium between these two states of the heart; no more than there is between enmity and love. Then the sinner is a rebel until he submits. But, will God accept the service of the knees, or lips, while the heart remains rebellious? Is not submission—implying a cordial acquiescence in the terms of the gospel—the first point where hope begins, and where God manifests the tokens of his favor? Why not come to this point

then, immediately, if we must come to it at last, in order to be saved? Ought we not to urge this duty upon the awakened sinner, with all the power of argument, of warning, and of entreaty? endeavoring to take from under him every prop upon which he is resting, that he may fall immediately, as a lost sinner, at the footstool of sovereign mercy—crying—"Lord save, or I perish!" Should we not endeavor to impress it upon his mind, that he is growing worse and worse, and his condition becoming more and more hopeless, notwithstanding all his distress and all his prayers, until he comes to this point? And not to suffer him, if we can help it, to go toiling aud laboring in fruitless attempts to save himself, or to bring God down to any other terms than those he has prescribed in his word. He professes to be going to Christ; and we ought to tell him—Christ is at your right hand, and ready to receive you in a moment, if you are ready to receive him, with a penitent, willing and obedient heart. But the route you are taking is, at best a very circuitous one, and there are a thousand probabilities that in your wanderings, you will lose your impressions, or settle down on a formal profession, and so never come to Christ, Therefore, accept of his invitations, and "come, for all things are now ready."

In giving directions to awakened sinners, we are sometimes led into error, by a species of false charity, thinking that as they are now under so much religious concern, their hearts are not so wicked as the Bible represents the hearts of all unconverted persons to be. The direction to which I am now objecting, goes upon the assumption, that they are not so wicked. "You must repent—but whether you repent immediately, or not, you must use the means of grace." This is giving the sinner quarters, where God does not design he should have any. From enemies and rebels, he accepts of nothing but unconditional submission. He will make no compromise. Repent or perish, is the only condition.—But he is now under conviction, and he has many tender feelings, and sheds a great many tears. Does not this lessen his enmity, and will it not by using the means of grace, be gradually softened down and changed into love?—If this be admitted, we must conclude that when the Apostle characterizes the impenitent as "haters of God," he only meant, that they hate an erroneous idea of God, and not his true character. Is this a sin? Is it not our duty to hate false representations of Jehovah's character.

*Doubtless* the Apostle meant, what his words plainly ex-

press, that sinners hate the true character of God. The reason why this hatred is not universally felt, is that they have a wrong view of the character of God. They regard him as a kind Father, Benefactor, &c—leaving out of our view his holiness, his justice, his sovreignty. It is against these attributes, that the enmity of the sinner's heart is directed. The light of conviction then, which brings them to view, so far from lessening his enmity, increases it; and it continues to increase, to the very last moment, before the rebel is subdued.—It is true therefore, to say, that the convicted, as well as the careless sinner, is waxing worse and worse, and that his sins are increasing continually, in a most tremendous ratio, if there be any sin in hating God, and in that pride and stubbornness of the heart, which refuses to submit to the terms of the gospel. This truth ought to be thundered in his ears until he is made to feel it. Of course, we ought not to give him any encouragement to continue in this state for a moment, or to hope he is improving his condition or lessening the difficulties in the way of his salvation, by his prayers or any thing else he does. Nay, verily, these difficulties are augmenting, and he is receding farther and farther from that state of mind to which he is required to come. There is, therefore, but one way of safety for him; and that is immediate repentance. He must change his mind—cease from being a rebel—submit unreservedly and unconditionally; and while he confesses he deserves condemnation, give himself up to Christ, to be saved on the terms of the gospel.—When the awakened sinner is pressed with these requirements, and no hope is held out to him on any other conditions, it will soon discover to him the desperate wickedness of his heart; for he will feel that he is opposed to these requirements, and think it hard that God will accept of nothing he does, without a compliance with them. When his distress is very great, he would be willing to give any thing he possesses, to obtain peace and safety, he would perform any external service—travel on a pilgrimage, or, say his prayers as often as you please. But this duty is unconditional and immediate submission to a sovereign God, freely acknowledging that God is right, and that himself is wrong; and there is not a particle of merit in any thing he ever did, that he can lay God under no obligation to save him; that he must rely entirely upon Christ for salvation—be "willing and obedient"—against all this his heart rises and rebels, even when his understanding is

convinced that there is no hope for him on any other ground. Here, he is at his wits' end; in the very dilemma in which it is the design, of both the law and the gospel, to make him feel that he is placed, in order to impress fully upon his mind, the awful conviction that he is lost. This and nothing but this, will bring him to Christ, and make him willing to be saved on any terms.

The directions which are often given to awakened sinners have a very different tendency. In the first place they tend to lessen the conviction of guilt, while a great deal is said about danger. Here is a person in distress; we dislike to increase it, by telling him, his heart is rebellious against God, and unwilling to comply with the terms of the gospel; and that *that* is the cause of his distress. He tries to believe that he is mourning for sin and repenting, when, if the terms of reconciliation were clearly stated to him, his heart would revolt at them. Well; we do not call in question the sincerity of his mourning; we say nothing to him about his unwillingness, and thereby leave him under the impression that he is willing. He thinks that God's time has not yet come, and we do not rectify this dangerous mistake. We tell him, persevere in using the means of grace,—although you have not yet obtained relief, you will obtain it; implying, that God will hear his prayers and accept him, without any change on his, that is, the sinner's part; for if we mean that before we can find relief and acceptance, the change must take place in him, why do we not tell him so distinctly? and then he will know what he has to do, and where the blame must lie, until it is accomplished. Having received the above direction, the sinner's mind is soothed, and he thinks he is now in a hopeful way. He feels none of the guilt of unwillingness, resting upon his conscience, for he thinks that he is willing, that he has done all he can do, and now he must wait for God, to do what remains to be done; not considering that God commands him to do this very thing, and lays upon him all the guilt of not having done it. "Repent," that is, change your mind. "Make you a new heart and a new spirit, for why will ye die."

It is easy to see that such defective directions tend to lessen the convictions of an awakened sinner, and ultimately lead him to entertain many hard thoughts of God upon whom he is disposed to lay the blame of not having religion, instead of laying the blame on his own soul. This

counteracts the work of the Holy Spirit. The object of which is in the first place to convince of sin, and to make the sinner feel that he is lost.

The efforts of many seem to be employed to prevent the sinner from coming to this conviction. As soon as he is a little distressed, they strive to relieve and sooth the mind, instead of co-operating with the Holy Spirit in convincing him that his heart is just as wicked and his condition just as bad, as the Bible describes it to be; and then urging him to immediate submission, which would be likely soon to convince him that he is in the dilemma above described.

In the second place, these directions tend to prolong the period of conviction and distress, even in those cases where it ultimately issues in saving conversion. This is so obvious, from remarks already made, that I need not here dwell upon it. But the worst of all is, that many after having waited sufficiently long, as they think, for the work of the Spirit, make a profession of religion before they have experienced it; concluding, that, as they have been very diligent in the use of means, and, at times had some tenderness of feeling, that perhaps the Spirit has performed this mysterious operation gradually and imperceptibly: that probably they have experienced a change, and ought now to take the comfort of it. They feel willing to go on in the same way they have begun, and are glad to obtain peace of mind on terms which involve, comparatively, so little sacrifice of the feelings of a proud, rebellious heart. I am awfully afraid that thousands are resting upon this sort of religious experience or upon something equally dangerous. The conduct of many furnishes too much evidence of the fact. If they had been thoroughly convinced of sin; if they had, under this conviction, realized that they were justly condemned, and lost sinners, and from that awful condition been snatched by the hand of mercy; —all this would have made an impression upon their hearts which they could never forget; they would have felt themselves under infinite obligations; their daily inquiry would have been "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" and they would have thought, that they could never do enough for the glory of Him who had done so much for them. They could have been ready for every good work. To please and glorify God, and to do good to their fellow men would have been their ruling passion. If all professors of religion were of this description, the cause of Christ would not languish as it does, churches would be built where they are wanted; and those that have been built would be paid for; ministers and missionaries would be support-

ed; the funds of Bible, Education and other societies, would be replenished; revivals would be common and perhaps continue without intermission; the Milennium would soon commence; and the kingdoms of this world would soon become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ.

But when persons are brought into the Church without having seen and felt their true character and condition as lost sinners; and without a corresponding sense of infinite obligation for redeeming mercy; and without any other kind of love to Christ than that which arises from the hope that he will save them;—why their object is in a great degree accomplished when they get into the church. They now have much more peace of mind than they formerly had; they hope that they are christians, and, of course that they are safe. As to the cause of Christ, they feel little or no concern about it. They have other objects of attention and solicitude, more important in their estimation. They may indeed contribute something to support the show of religion; they may decorate their churches, and discover much zeal for their party, and for the mere externals of religion:—all this cherishes their false hopes; they think themselves, and wish others to think them very pious. Some contribute a little grudgingly, to support the gospel, because, if they were to do absolutely nothing; they would neither believe themselves nor make others believe them to be christians. A regard to consistency, and to their own reputation, is their leading motive; and even that has very little influence with some. But to do good, simply with a view to please God, or to benefit their fellow men; to make a really disinterested sacrifice for the cause of Christ; and to stand in readiness to make such sacrifices whenever the providence of God shall demand them;—they will not do it. So far from making such efforts and contributions with the cheerfulness and zeal of one who loves Christ, and who takes a lively interest in his cause, they will often get out of temper when solicited to aid benevolent and pious objects. One is tempted to think, that it would be a great relief to them if something would occur to put a final stop to all the efforts that are making to christianize the world, that there might be no further demands upon their purses for assistance in carrying on this great work. They could then enjoy their selfish pleasures and pursuits as well, and sleep as quietly, while the world around them would be going to destruction, as if all were certainly on their way to heaven. MEN and BRETHREN! Does not this state of things call for a reformation? Do we not need ministers like John the Baptist, and Martin Luther to go

from "Dan to Beersheba," and "preach repentance for the remission of sins," to professors of religion? If we were able to draw accurately the line of demarkation between those who love Christ, those whose hearts are really devoted to his cause; and those who are resting upon false religious experience, or upon no religious experience at all, the prospect would astonish and overwhelm us. The multitude whom Satan is leading to destruction under the cloak of a christian profession would startle every beholder. "We are not ignorant of his devices;" and we know he would as soon take sinners to hell in the character of professors of religion, as in any other character. Since therefore he cannot put down the truth entirely it is his policy to mingle with it as much error as he can: and he knows that errors on such subjects as those discussed in the foregoing pages, are peculiarly favorable to his designs. Wrong directions to awakened sinners are as likely to issue in their eternal overthrow, as any means he could employ. They lead—it is to be feared—in thousands of instances, to the indulgence of false hopes, and the assumption of a mere "form of godliness," It is on this account that I have been so particular in stating and maintaining, what appears to me to be the only safe and scriptural directions. I am well aware, however, that there are many who do not stand in need of any information which I could give them on this subject. But there are many other's, who perhaps, may be aided in forming correct views, by the statements contained in the preceding Narrative and Remarks. Even one additional ray of light on subjects so vitally important, will doubtless be welcomed by those who love and rejoice in the truth.

4th. The following pages of Scripture have appeared to me in a more important light than ever before. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." "Wo unto them when I depart from them." "For this cause God shall give them up to strong delusion that they may believe a lie," &c. "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever."

It is difficult to reconcile these passages with the following lines of a hymn, which is often sung and which, like some sermons we hear, and some books we read, contains much truth, mingled with some error. The error is received along with the truth, and so counteracts its influence: or it is received to the exclusion of the truth; and thus mischief has been often done by those whose general aim was to do good:

> And while the lamp holds out to burn,
> "The vilest sinner may return."

Different constructions may indeed be put upon these words; but the most obvious idea, and that which the impenitent will most readily receive from them, is in direct opposition to the passages of Scripture above cited; and while they were dwelling upon the awakened sinner's mind, he will not be likely to believe us when we tell him that by his obstinate impenitence, he is in danger of provoking God to depart from him, to take his Holy Spirit from him, and to give him up to strong delusion, that he might believe a lie, and, as the dreadful consequence, "be damned, with all who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness."

These texts certainly authorize us in saying that no impenitent sinner can be assured that this day of grace will last as long as his life. I know some, and it makes my soul shudder to think of them, whose day of grace, there is much reason to fear, is forever past. There are some who have been much awakened during this revival, but who have lost every serious impression; and now appear to be in a similar state to those of whom the Savior speaks in these most pathetic words:—"If thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! But now are they hid from thine eyes!" This doctrine ought to be most solemnly impressed upon the minds of awakened sinners.

If these and other associated truths of the gospel, were urged as they ought to be, with clearness and pungency, upon the consciences of sinners both in public and private; and other means employed similar to those above stated, with a single eye to the glory of God and the salvation of souls, the Divine blessing might, I believe, in all cases be confidently expected. When and where have such efforts been made in vain? The history of the church cannot furnish an instance God will bless his truth; and he will hear the prayers, and succeed the faithful labors of his people. This truth is confirmed by all the revivals that have taken place since the day of Pentecost, to the present time. I lay it down then as a principle, that *there are means which when perseveringly employed, have always been blest to the revival of religion.* If this be admitted, we must also admit, that where religion is in a cold and languid state, and few or none are enquiring the way to Zion, there is something wrong in the church of God; there is an Achan in the camp; or there is a partial dereliction of duty on the part of the minister, or of the members of the church, or of both. This is certainly more ingenuous and more scriptural than to ascribe such a wretched state of things to the want of a sovereign dis-

pensation of Divine grace. There is a connexion between the faithful discharge of duty, and the blessing of God. When therefore, we do not enjoy a revival, we should freely acknowledge that the church is to blame; and take it for granted that something more ought to be done, than we are doing. The absence of a revival, then, ought not to be regarded as our affliction, so much as our sin; and each one is answerable to God for this sin, so far as he neglects to employ his efforts for this object. The magnitude of this sin swells beyond the bounds of calculation, when we consider how much good is done by a revival; and how much evil exists in its absence. We have reason to tremble when we take this view of the subject; for, verily, the blood of souls is in our skirts, and will be required at our hands!

I have been for a number of years in the habit of reading accounts of revivals, and I do not recollect one that was produced without some extraordinary effort, either on the part of the minister, or of some of his people. When I call such efforts extraordinary I do not mean to intimate that they are works of supererogation, or in any degree out of the line of our duty. On the contrary, I am persuaded that neither the claims of duty, nor the dictates of an enlightened and tender conscience, are satisfied without them. I wish to be understood. I mean to assert, that the ordinary course pursued by many ministers and Christians, is greatly defective. They have made the service of God more systematic and formal than it was intended to be. And, in doing this, they have set bounds and limits to their exertions in the cause of Christ, which neither his word, nor his example, nor the example of his apostles, will justify. If the precise order and extent of religious duties they observe, had been prescribed in the Bible, they might then have expected every blessing while pursuing this order. But no such order has been prescribed; men have adopted it of their own accord, because they think it is authorized, by the word of God. Well—admit that it is thus divinely authorized, as far as it goes, does it embrace all that is required of us? If it does, I have totally mistaken the meaning of the Sacred Records on this subject. When, therefore, I say we must make extraordinary efforts to have a revival, I only mean that we must perform more ministerial and Christian duty, than many do perform. There must be a change, in this respect, to produce a revival in a particular church; and there must be a general change of a similar nature, throughout christendom, before the millennium will be likely to take place.

There is a certain amount of labour with which many ministers satisfy themselves. They preach once or twice on the Sabbath

and perhaps as often during the week, and perform a few other professional duties. Custom has established this as a standard. When a young minister enters upon his profession, he finds this standard already fixed, and he hardly questions whether any thing more be required of him. If any one goes beyond it, such remarks as these are likely to be made respecting him:—"He is weak," or "he is eccentric," or "he has zeal without knowledge, and that leads him to substitute means of his own invention, in the place of those which God has ordained." This seems to imply their belief, that the routine according to which they are proceeding, comprises the sum total of all the means which we are required to employ for the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world. This is an assumption which they cannot prove; and, therefore, they ought, at least, to withhold their censures from those who, for conscience's sake, and for Christ's sake, and the sake of perishing souls, deviate occasionally from the usual mode of ministerial operation, and try every lawful means in their power, to awaken a slumbering church and to pull sinners out of the fire of hell, into which they are continually descending.

Custom has also established a standard of duty for private Christians. This, is, perhaps, still farther below the scriptural standard, and is so evident as to require no proof. Until therefore, ministers, and professors generally, are awakened from this state of comparative indifference, and, "girding up the loins of their minds," address themselves to the performance of their respective duties under the full impression that they are "not their own;" that they are servants of Jesus Christ, and bound to seek his glory in all things; laying it down as a principle, that they must do as much good as they can; setting no bounds to their desires of usefulness; keeping their hearts fixed upon the things which pertain to the kingdom of God, with a degree of interest which will nerve and inspirit the soul to every holy enterprise;—the world will not be converted to God. The empire of Satan is too firmly rooted to be shaken by such tame and feeble efforts as thousands are making at the present day. There must be a more general and powerful movement in the camp of Israel before we shall see the accomplishment in those prophecies which relate to the future prosperity and glory of the church.

But such a movement is not to be expected while "the spirit of this world" has so extensive an influence over the minds of those who profess to be the children of light. As far as it prevails, it *desecrates* the christian character, and divests it of the power of making that impression upon the world which other-

wise it could not fail to make. This spirit has paralyzed the energies of many, who perhaps, are on the whole, real christians; and it reigns predominant in the hearts of others, who have nothing more than a "form of godliness." Many there are who have all the sanctity that baptism and the Lord's supper can give them, who resemble those of whom the apostle Paul speaks "weeping;—whose god is their belly, whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things—who seek their own things and not the things which are Jesus Christ's." The existence of so many of this description in the church, should excite all those who love her purity and prosperity, to pray and labor for a general revival. If a revival do not shake their false hopes they are irreclaimable; and nothing can be expected to arouse them to a sense of their true character and condition, before they are enveloped in the flames of the bottomless pit! Since our revival commenced, there have been a number of old professors awakened, and hopefully converted. Such things are common in revivals; but they seldom occur at any other time.

Here I would suggest, that some revivals have commenced by the faithful exercise of church discipline, and, perhaps, nothing is more necessary to the revival of true religion in the churches, generally, than a proper attention to this duty.

The observance of days of fasting and prayer, in reference to this object, have also been found to be very useful. On such days, if the church would renew their covenant with God, confessing their sins, and resolving to be more faithful, it would be likely to have the happiest effect. If ministers have neglected their duty, let them acknowledge it, and give glory to God, while they take shame to themselves. Such acknowledgments have, in some instances, made a powerful impression.

In cases of this nature, we ought not to wait for a simultaneous movement of the whole church to accomplish the important object; no not even the countenance and support of "those who are of reputation," or of those who are in authority. Each one should resolve—"Now I will with the help of God, discharge my duty faithfully, though all the other members of the church should neglect theirs.

I have often asked my own soul such questions as the following; and I propose them to the serious consideration of all professors of religion, who may read these pages. If you are Christians, they will not hurt you; if you are not Christians, they may, through God's blessing, convince you of your mistake while yet there is hope. "Have I the very religion taught by Christ and his Apostles? Or have I been resting upon something

essentially different from that? Have I ever been sensible of the enmity of my heart to God? Am I now reconciled to all the parts of his character, not excepting his justice, his holiness, his sovreignty? Do I love and rejoice in him supremely, not merely because I think he is my friend and will save me; but because he is infinitely worthy of my love? Do I see that I deserve condemnation, and regard it as an infinite mercy, that I have not been condemned long ago? Do I feel that I am not my own but entirely the Lord's? Am I living to him, and not to myself? Subjecting my will to his will, and subordinating my interests to those of his kingdom? What have I done, and what am I now doing to promote true religion within the sphere of my influence? Is it as much as the Lord requires of me, considering the talents and means he has given me? Continuing in the course I am now pursuing, am I likely to have a goood account to render to my Judge who even now standeth at the door?" Close self-examination, leading to deep self-abasement before God, is an important step towards a revival.

## CONCLUSION.

My object in writing this piece, has not been chiefly to give a narrative of a revival; but to promote the spirit of revival; to excite my fellow christians to a more faithful discharge of their duties; and to offer such suggestions as may assist those who are conscious of having neglected their duty, in determining what they ought now to do.

Another object I have had in view, is to furnish a tract, which may with advantage be distributed in a congregation during the progress of a revival, especially where incorrect views are entertained respecting some points here discussed. At such times, it is very important that all should "speak the same thing."—Even pious persons, may, unintentionally, do injury, by giving to inquirers, injudicious directions. It is presumed, that such persons will thankfully receive any instructions that may assist them in performing this momentous duty. Besides—it may often happen in revivals, that so many will be in an anxious state of mind, that the minister cannot pay the necessary attention to all. It might, therefore, be a relief to his mind, and an advantage to his people, to put into their hands such a pamphlet as this, containing the same general views of doctrine, and the same directions which he would give them if he could converse with each separately. They who hold opinions different from those here maintained, will, of course, pursue a different plan.—If any of my young brethren in the ministry, think my censures fall too heavily upon them, I can only say, my aim is to do them good, and to promote the cause of my Savior. I censure none so severely as I censure myself. I mourn before God to think of my past unfaithfulness; while I bless his name for the desire I now feel to live henceforth to his glory; and I shall rejoice, if what I have said should, under the Divine blessing, which I earnestly implore, be the means of guarding any against that negligent, indifferent, heartless manner of performing the momentous duties of the ministry, which has caused me so many painful feelings of regret and self-dissatisfaction.

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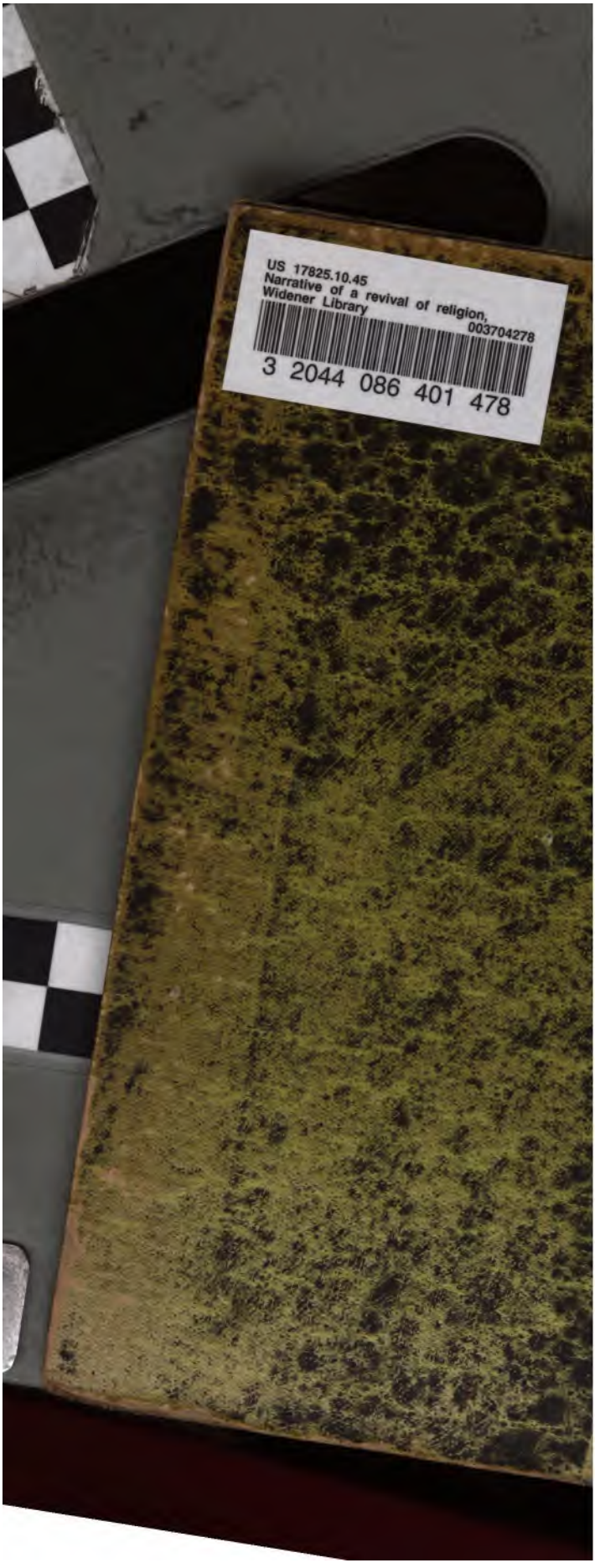
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